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Information and communications technologies for development

Ecuador:* draft resolution

Information and communications technologies for sustainable development

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 56/183 of 21 December 2001, 57/238 of 20 December 2002, 57/270 B of 23 June 2003, 59/220 of 22 December 2004, 60/252 of 27 March 2006, 62/182 of 19 December 2007, 63/202 of 19 December 2008, 64/187 of 21 December 2009, 65/141 of 20 December 2010, 66/184 of 22 December 2011, 67/195 of 21 December 2012, 68/198 of 20 December 2013, 69/204 of 19 December 2014, 70/184 of 22 December 2015 and 71/212 of 21 December 2016,

Recalling also Economic and Social Council resolutions 2006/46 of 28 July 2006, 2008/3 of 18 July 2008, 2009/7 of 24 July 2009, 2010/2 of 19 July 2010, 2011/16 of 26 July 2011, 2012/5 of 24 July 2012, 2013/9 of 22 July 2013, 2014/27 of 16 July 2014, 2015/26 of 22 July 2015 and 2016/22 of 27 July 2016, and taking note of Council resolution 2017/21 of 6 July 2017 on the assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society,

Reaffirming its resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", in which it adopted a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals and targets, its commitment to working tirelessly for the full implementation of the Agenda by 2030, its recognition that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, its commitment to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions — economic, social and environmental — in a balanced and integrated manner, and to building upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and seeking to address their unfinished business,

Reaffirming also its resolution 69/313 of 27 July 2015 on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for

* On behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China.

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Development, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, supports and complements it, helps to contextualize its means of implementation targets with concrete policies and actions, and reaffirms the strong political commitment to address the challenge of financing and creating an enabling environment at all levels for sustainable development in the spirit of global partnership and solidarity,

Recalling the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action adopted by the World Summit on the Information Society at its first phase, held in Geneva from 10 to 12 December 2003,[1] and endorsed by the General Assembly,[2] and the Tunis Commitment and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society adopted by the Summit at its second phase, held in Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005,[3] and endorsed by the Assembly,[4]

Noting the references to information and communications technologies contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and reiterating calls for close alignment between the World Summit on the Information Society process and the 2030 Agenda, as well as other relevant intergovernmental outcomes, including the New Urban Agenda, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), held in Quito from 17 to 20 October 2016,[5]

Recalling the outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society,[6] held in New York on 15 and 16 December 2015, in which it took stock of the progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit, addressed potential information and communications technology gaps and identified areas for continued focus,

Reaffirming the World Summit on the Information Society vision of a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society,

Recognizing that information and communications technologies present new opportunities and challenges and that there is a pressing need to address the major impediments that developing countries face in accessing new technologies, stressing the need to address prevailing challenges to bridge the digital divides, both between and within countries and between women and men, and to harness information and communications technologies for development, and recalling the need to emphasize quality of access to bridge digital and knowledge divides, using a multidimensional approach that includes speed, stability, affordability, language, local content and accessibility for persons with disabilities,

Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels,[7]

Noting the call for the continuation of annual reports on the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, through the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, to the Economic and Social Council, and reaffirming the role of the Commission, as set forth in Council resolution 2006/46, in assisting the Council as the focal point in the system-wide

[1] See A/C.2/59/3, annex.
[2] See resolution 59/220.
[3] See A/60/687.
[4] See resolution 60/252.
[5] Resolution 71/256, annex.
[6] Resolution 70/125.
[7] A/72/64-E/2017/12.

follow-up, in particular the review and assessment of progress made in implementing the outcomes of the World Summit,

Noting also the holding of the twentieth session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development in Geneva from 8 to 12 May 2017, and looking forward to the twenty-first session, which will include as a priority theme "Building digital competencies to benefit from existing and emerging technologies, with special focus on gender and youth dimensions", thus providing a platform for all stakeholders to share experiences and pursue partnerships for capacity-building,

Noting further the holding of the World Summit on the Information Society Forum, jointly organized annually by the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Development Programme,

Taking note of the report of the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development entitled *The State of Broadband 2017: Broadband Catalysing Sustainable Development*, which provides an evaluation of the progress made towards achieving the Commission's advocacy targets for broadband and the state of broadband development worldwide, noting with alarm the growing digital inequality between developed and developing countries identified in the report, and taking note of the report of the special session of the Commission, entitled "Working together to connect the next 1.5 billion by 2020", in which the Commission noted that less than half the world's population is currently connected to the Internet and fewer than 1 in 10 people in the least developed countries are connected, as well as the progress report of the Working Group on the Digital Gender Divide on four recommendations for action in bridging the gender digital divide, namely, understanding the context through sex-disaggregated data, integrating a gender perspective in strategies, policies, plans and budgets, addressing barriers, including access, affordability, safety, digital skills and relevance, and collaboration and sharing good practices,

Welcoming the holding of the first session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy in Geneva from 4 to 6 October 2017, and looking forward to its policy recommendations on what developing countries need in order to build competitive advantages through e-commerce and the digital economy, what developing countries can do in order to strengthen their physical and technology infrastructure and how developed countries can partner with developing countries, in the most impactful way, to maximize opportunities and address challenges relating to e-commerce and the digital economy, in order to strengthen the development dimension,

Recognizing the fact that information and communications technologies are critical enablers of economic development, with consequential benefits for employment and social welfare, lowering barriers to economic participation, and that the increasing pervasiveness of information and communications technologies within society has had profound impacts on the ways in which Governments deliver services, businesses relate to consumers and citizens participate in public and private life,

Stressing, however, that recent progress notwithstanding, there remain important and growing digital divides between and within developed and developing countries in terms of the availability, affordability and use of information and communications technologies and access to broadband, and stressing also the urgent need to close digital divides, including with regard to such issues as the affordability of the Internet, and to ensure that the benefits of information and communications technologies, including new technologies, are

available to all, and in this regard reaffirming its commitment to significantly increase access to information and communications technologies and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020, noting the importance of the Connect 2020 Agenda for Global Telecommunication/Information and Communications Technologies Development,

Noting with great concern the fact that a gender digital divide persists in women's access to and use of information and communications technologies, including in education, employment and other areas of economic and social development,

Recognizing the need to focus on capacity development policies and sustainable support to further enhance the impact of activities and initiatives at the national and local levels aimed at providing advice, services and support, with a view to building an inclusive, people-centred and development-oriented information society,

Noting that topics continue to emerge, such as e-environment applications and the contribution of information and communications technologies to early warning, mitigating climate change, social networking, virtualization and cloud computing and services, mobile Internet and mobile-based services, cybersecurity, the gender gap, the protection of online privacy and the empowerment and protection, especially against cyberexploitation and abuse, of vulnerable groups of society, in particular children and young people,

Reaffirming that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, and emphasizing that progress towards the vision of the World Summit on the Information Society should be considered not only as a function of economic development and the spreading of information and communications technologies but also as a function of progress with respect to the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Reaffirming also that Internet governance, including the process towards enhanced cooperation and the convening of the Internet Governance Forum, should continue to follow the provisions set forth in the outcomes of the summits held in Geneva and Tunis,

Welcoming the efforts undertaken by the host countries in organizing the meetings of the Internet Governance Forum, held in Athens in 2006, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2007, in Hyderabad, India, in 2008, in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in 2009, in Vilnius in 2010, in Nairobi in 2011, in Baku in 2012, in Bali, Indonesia, in 2013, in Istanbul, Turkey, in 2014, in João Pessoa, Brazil, in 2015 and in Guadalajara, Mexico, in 2016 and the meeting to be held in Geneva in 2017,

Welcoming also the establishment of the Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation, based on the proposal by the Chair of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the structure and composition of the Working Group, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/125 of 16 December 2015 and endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2016/22,

Noting the holding by the International Telecommunication Union, in partnership with 20 other United Nations agencies and bodies, of the Artificial Intelligence for Good Global Summit, which provided a platform for Governments, United Nations agencies, civil society, the private sector and artificial intelligence experts to discuss the ethical, technical, societal and policy issues related to artificial intelligence, in order to harness its potential to support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

Conscious of the challenges faced by States, in particular developing countries, in combating the use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes, including by terrorists, and emphasizing the need to reinforce technical assistance and capacity-building activities, at their request, for the prevention, prosecution and punishment of such use in accordance with national and international law,

Stressing the importance of inclusiveness within the United Nations development system and that no country and no one is left behind in the implementation of the present resolution,

1. *Recognizes* that information and communications technologies have the potential to provide new solutions to development challenges, particularly in the context of globalization, and can foster sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development, competitiveness, access to information and knowledge, trade and development, poverty eradication and social inclusion that will help to expedite the integration of all countries, especially developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, into the global economy;

2. *Also recognizes* the potential of information and communications technologies to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[8] and other internationally agreed development goals, noting that they can accelerate progress across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, accordingly urges all Governments, the private sector, civil society, international organizations, the technical and academic communities and all other relevant stakeholders to integrate information and communications technologies into their approaches to implementing the Goals, and requests United Nations entities facilitating the World Summit on the Information Society action lines to review their reporting and workplans to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

3. *Reaffirms* its commitment to bridging digital and knowledge divides, recognizes that its approach must be multidimensional and include an evolving understanding of what constitutes access, emphasizing the quality of that access, and acknowledges that speed, stability, affordability, language, local content and accessibility for persons with disabilities are now core elements of quality and that high-speed broadband is already an essential enabler of sustainable development;

4. *Recognizes* the importance of the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed, as a means to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

5. *Encourages* strengthened and continuing cooperation between and among relevant stakeholders, taking into account their respective roles and responsibilities, to ensure the effective implementation of the outcomes of the Geneva[1] and Tunis[3] phases of the World Summit on the Information Society, through, inter alia, the promotion of national, regional and international multi-stakeholder partnerships, including public-private partnerships, and the promotion of national and regional multi-stakeholder thematic platforms in a joint effort and dialogue with developing countries, including the least developed countries, development partners and actors in the information and communications technologies sector;

6. *Notes* the progress that has been made by United Nations entities in cooperation with national Governments, regional commissions and other stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, in

[8] Resolution 70/1.

the implementation of the action lines contained in the outcome documents of the World Summit on the Information Society, and encourages the use of those action lines for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

7. *Also notes* that the digital economy is an important and growing part of the global economy and that connectivity is correlated with increases in gross domestic product, and recognizes the critical importance of expanding the participation of all countries, in particular developing countries, in the digital economy;

8. *Urges* a continued focus on maximizing development gains from e-commerce, through initiatives such as "eTrade for all", launched at the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, held in Nairobi from 17 to 22 July 2016, which provides a new approach to trade development through electronic exchanges by allowing developing countries to more easily navigate the supply of technical assistance for building capacity in e-commerce readiness and by enabling donors to have a clear picture of the programmes that they could fund;

9. *Recognizes* that there has been significant but uneven growth in access to and use of information and communications technology, and expresses concern over the substantial continued digital and broadband divides between and within developed and developing countries, including the fact that there are 90 mobile broadband subscriptions per 100 people in developed countries, compared with 41 in developing countries and less than 20 in the least developed countries, and that moreover the cost of access is generally higher in developing countries in relation to average household income, resulting in a lack of affordable access to information and communications technologies, and in this regard urges all relevant stakeholders to address the growing digital divides between and within countries through, among other actions, strengthened enabling policy environments at all levels and international cooperation to improve affordability, education, capacity-building, technology transfer on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed, and appropriate financing, with a continued focus on pro-poor policies on information and communications technology, including access to broadband at the grass-roots level;

10. *Also recognizes* that a gender digital divide persists, and that the proportion of women using the Internet is 12 per cent lower than that of men worldwide and 31 per cent lower in the least developed countries, notes with concern that, while the gender digital divide has narrowed in most regions since 2013, it has widened in Africa, in this regard calls upon all stakeholders to ensure the full participation of women in the information society and women's access to information and communications technologies for development, including new technologies, in this respect reiterates its request for relevant United Nations entities, including the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), to support the implementation and monitoring of the action lines contained in the outcome documents of the World Summit on the Information Society by enhancing the emphasis on gender, and reaffirms the commitment to ensure women's full participation in decision-making processes related to information and communications technologies;

11. *Notes* the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional level, facilitated by the regional commissions, as observed in the report of the Secretary-General on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit at the regional and international levels;[7]

12. *Encourages* the United Nations funds and programmes and the specialized agencies, within their respective mandates and strategic plans, to contribute to the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, and emphasizes the importance of allocating adequate resources in this regard;

13. *Recognizes* the importance of the Internet Governance Forum and its mandate as a forum for multi-stakeholder dialogue on various matters, as reflected in paragraph 72 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society,[3] and requests the Secretary-General to continue to submit, as part of his annual reporting on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels, information on the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Working Group on Improvements to the Internet Governance Forum,[9] in particular those on enhancing the participation of developing countries;

14. *Stresses* the need for the enhanced participation of Governments and relevant stakeholders from all developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, in all meetings of the Internet Governance Forum, and in this regard invites Member States, as well as other relevant stakeholders, to support the participation of Governments and all other relevant stakeholders from developing countries in the Forum itself, as well as in the preparatory meetings;

15. *Notes* the ongoing work of the Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation to develop recommendations on how to further implement enhanced cooperation as envisioned in the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, stresses the need for the Working Group to enable the full involvement of all States, and in this regard recognizes and encourages continued efforts to ensure the full involvement of Governments and other relevant stakeholders, in particular from developing countries, taking into account all their diverse views and expertise;

16. *Encourages* participants in the Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation to take forward their efforts to fulfil its mandate by submitting a report to the Commission on Science and Technology for Development at its twenty-first session, which would serve as an input to the regular reporting of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society;

17. *Recognizes* that information and communications technologies present new opportunities and challenges and that there is a pressing need to address the major impediments that developing countries face in accessing the new technologies, such as an appropriate enabling environment, sufficient resources, infrastructure, education, capacity, investment and connectivity, as well as issues related to technology ownership, standards and flows, and in this regard calls upon all stakeholders to provide adequate resources, enhanced capacity-building and transfer of technology and knowledge to developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, towards a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy;

18. *Also recognizes* the need to harness the potential of information and communications technologies as critical enablers of sustainable development and to overcome the digital divides, and stresses that capacity-building for the productive use of such technologies should be given due consideration in the implementation of

[9] A/67/65-E/2012/48 and Corr.1.

the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development;[10]

19. *Notes* that, while a solid foundation for capacity-building in information and communications technology has been laid in many areas with regard to building the information society, there is still a need for continuing efforts to address the ongoing challenges, especially for developing countries and the least developed countries, and draws attention to the positive impact of broadened capacity development that involves institutions, organizations and entities dealing with information and communications technologies and Internet governance issues;

20. *Recognizes* the importance of assisting developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, to address the challenges and opportunities in relation to the use of the Internet and e-commerce to develop their international trade capacities, among other things;

21. *Also recognizes* that a lack of access to affordable and reliable technologies and services remains a critical challenge in many developing countries, in particular African countries, the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and middle-income countries, as well as countries and peoples under foreign occupation, countries in situations of conflict, post-conflict countries and countries affected by natural disasters, and that all efforts should be deployed to reduce the price of information and communications technologies and broadband access, bearing in mind that deliberate interventions, including through research and development and technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, may be necessary to spur the development of lower-cost connectivity options;

22. *Further recognizes* the importance of the free flow of information and knowledge, as the amount of information distributed worldwide grows and the role of communication becomes all the more important, and acknowledges that the mainstreaming of information and communications technologies in school curricula, open access to data, the fostering of competition, the creation of transparent, predictable, independent and non-discriminatory regulatory and legal systems, proportionate taxation and licensing fees, access to finance, the facilitation of public-private partnerships, multi-stakeholder cooperation, national and regional broadband strategies, efficient allocation of the radio frequency spectrum, infrastructure sharing models, community-based approaches and public access facilities have in many countries facilitated significant gains in connectivity and sustainable development;

23. *Calls upon* all stakeholders to keep the goal of bridging the digital divides, in their different forms, an area of priority concern, to put into effect sound strategies that contribute to the development of e-government and to continue to focus on pro-poor information and communications technology policies and applications, including access to broadband at the grass-roots level, with a view to narrowing the digital divides among and within countries and, in turn, building information and knowledge societies;

24. *Notes* the commitments made in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and recognizes that official development assistance and other concessional financial flows for information and communications technologies can make significant contributions to development outcomes, in particular where they can reduce the risk of public and private investment, and increase the use of information and communications technologies to strengthen good governance and tax collection;

[10] Resolution 69/313, annex.

25. *Recognizes* the critical importance of private sector investment in information and communications technology infrastructure, content and services, encourages Governments to create legal and regulatory frameworks conducive to increased investment and innovation, and also recognizes the importance of public-private partnerships, universal access strategies and other approaches to this end, and calls upon relevant organizations of the United Nations system to foster, inter alia, partnerships with the public and private sectors and advise on instruments to facilitate access to public and private funding for information and communications technologies;

26. *Welcomes* the holding of the second annual Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development, takes note of its intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations, looks forward to further advancement in the follow-up process, welcomes the work of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, the progress made in operationalizing the three components of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism and the holding of the second annual multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, which is important, inter alia, to help to facilitate the development, transfer and dissemination of relevant technologies for the Sustainable Development Goals, and calls for further voluntary contributions to support the full operationalization of all components of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, including the establishment of the online platform and operationalization of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries;

27. *Calls upon* the relevant organizations of the United Nations system, within their respective mandates and resources, to ensure that no country and no one is left behind in the implementation of the present resolution;

28. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, through the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the Economic and Social Council, a report on the status of the implementation of and follow-up to the present resolution, taking into account the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda the review process of the World Summit on the Information Society, the summary by the Co-Chairs of the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals[11] and other relevant processes, as part of his annual report on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels;

29. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-third session an item entitled "Information and communications technologies for sustainable development".

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[11] E/HLPF/2017/4.